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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001079

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EFIN](#) [KCOR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NEW EFCC CHAIR AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO  
FIGHT CORRUPTION

REF: A. ABUJA 946

[1](#)B. ABUJA 898

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b  
& d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Sanders paid a courtesy call on newly confirmed (June 5) Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chairwoman Farida Waziri on June 10, where she underscored the importance the U.S. places on the EFCC maintaining its vigor and fight against corruption, noting that the U.S. had concerns given all the recent changes at the Commission. Waziri stressed her commitment to anti-corruption efforts and her hopes to continue the capacity building programs that the U.S. has with the EFCC. She acknowledged that recent press reports regarding her appointment had likely caused significant concern in the international community, but wanted to reassure the U.S. through the Ambassador that these allegations were not true and that she was committed to actively working to advance Nigeria's anti-graft war. Waziri came across on the surface as wanting to maintain the EFCC's focus, and also advance it to become a strong institution. Ultimately, however, the true test of Waziri's commitment will be in how she handles ongoing high profile EFCC investigations and whether the EFCC moves forward or stalls. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Nigerian Senate on June 5 confirmed former Assistant Inspector General of Police Farida Waziri as the new Chairwoman of the EFCC after a contentious two weeks of allegations and counter-allegations regarding her fitness for the position based on her past connections to some ex-governors under investigation. (NOTE: On May 17, former Senator and 2007 Action Party (AC) Vice Presidential candidate Ben Ndi Obi told PolOffs he believes Waziri will go after the "big fish," including former President Obasanjo. Obi contended that Obasanjo was so worried by Waziri's nomination that he actively lobbied against it. END NOTE.) Waziri's appointment effectively ends any speculation that the previous EFCC Chairman, Nuhu Ribadu, would be returned to the post following his 9-month study tour.

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador Sanders paid a courtesy call on Waziri on June 10, stressing that the call was meant to underscore the USG's concern about the EFCC as well as its desire to ensure that our capacity building programs on the anti-corruption fight would still be accepted and go forward. The Ambassador

expressed the U.S. expectation that the EFCC will continue to pursue its investigations and fight corruption with the same vigor and commitment it has shown in the past under former Chairman Ribadu and acting Chair Lamorde. She stressed the need to support the EFCC as an institution, building capacity that is independent of personality. Ambassador Sanders briefly outlined ongoing USG cooperation with the EFCC and expressed hope that our programs with the organization will continue to expand and deepen under Waziri's Chairmanship. She invited the EFCC under Waziri to participate in anti-corruption working groups under the U.S.-Nigerian bilateral Framework for Partnership program, which includes technical assistance on anti-fraud investigation, as well as discussions on the need for automated databases on criminal elements that would help overall to reduce graft.

¶4. (C) Waziri thanked the Ambassador for the visit, noting that the Ambassador was her first official visitor as Chairwoman -- a sign, Waziri observed, of U.S. support for Nigeria's fight against corruption. Waziri affirmed her commitment to anti-corruption efforts, expressing her desire to protect the sovereign wealth of the nation by ensuring that it is not used for illicit enrichment by those who do not have the best interest of the country at heart. She noted examples of her past work in the police force where she had played a key role in having monies that had been laundered through Germany returned to Nigeria, where she was involved in the protection of the German national who was brought back to provide evidence in the case. She noted recent allegations in the press regarding her bona fides for this appointment, recognizing the serious concern that these

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allegations have caused both domestically and among Nigeria's international community anti-corruption partners, such as the U.S. Waziri maintained, however, that they were nothing more than allegations, saying "This is newspapers... They don't care who they offend or misrepresent." (NOTE: Although she dismissed the reports as "allegations," she never explicitly denied nor refuted any of the charges of impropriety leveled by the press. She allowed the entire meeting with the Ambassador to be covered by her internal press office. END NOTE.)

¶5. (C) Ambassador Sanders reiterated U.S. concern over the EFCC, and shared with the new Chairwoman a schedule of upcoming USG programs that are planned with the Commission, noting that not only did we hope these could continue but that there was also a strong desire to see the EFCC strengthened. Waziri noted that she would look for continued capacity building support and technical assistance from the U.S.

¶6. (C) COMMENT. We still have grave concerns as noted in our reporting (reftels) regarding Waziri's questionable ties to Kwara State Governor Bukola Saraki (PDP), the Saraki family, former Delta Governor James Ibori (PDP), and former Benue Governor and current Senator George Akume (PDP) -- all of whom have cases or ties in some form or another before the EFCC. These connections will continue to make her suspect until we see how these are handled. In addition, despite Waziri's testimony to the Nigerian Senate that she did not stand surety for Senator Akume, online blog Sahara Reporters (we recognize that blogs can be incorrect in what they report) has posted purported copies of Akume's passport that were signed: "original passport of Senator George Akume collected by me. Chief Farida Waziri, AIG rtd." dated 8 November 2007. Ultimately however, the true test of Waziri's commitment to fighting corruption will be the extent to which she proceeds with EFCC cases against Ibori, the Saraki family, Akume, and other "big fish" currently under investigation and whether the EFCC is as robust as it was under Ribadu. END COMMENT.  
SANDERS